Amendments to the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-20 (cancelled)

21. (currently amended) A method for reducing the permeability of vapor or gas though a multilayer rigid container body ~~structure~~ comprising a polymeric base layer and an inorganic oxide gas barrier layer on ~~a~~ an exterior surface of the polymeric base layer, the inorganic oxide barrier layer having pinholes, the method comprising applying to the inorganic oxide gas barrier layer ~~a top coat~~ an aqueous solution comprising water and a water soluble compound capable of reducing the permeability of the multilayer structure to gas or vapor and evaporating the water, so as to form a top coat on the inorganic oxide barrier layer at least partially disposed in the pinholes, the top coat comprising the water soluble compound.

22. (currently amended) A method as in claim 21 wherein the water soluble compound has a carboxyl, hydroxyl, or carboxamide functional group.

23. (currently amended) A method as in claim 21 wherein the water soluble compound is in a solid state at a temperature of 25 degrees C and atmospheric pressure.

24. (currently amended) A method as in claim 21 wherein the water soluble compound is nonreactive with SiOx.

25. (currently amended) A method as in claim 21 wherein the water soluble compound is nontoxic.

26. (currently amended) A method as in claim 21 wherein the water soluble compound is polymeric.

27. (currently amended) A method as in claim 26 wherein the polymeric water soluble compound is selected from the group consisting of carboxymethyl cellulose, poly(acrylamide), polydextrose, poly(acrylic acid), and poly(vinyl alcohol).

28. (currently amended) A method as in claim 21 wherein the water soluble compound is monomeric.

29. (currently amended) A method as in claim 28 wherein the monomeric water soluble compound is selected from the group consisting of sucrose, caramel, and citric acid.

30. (cancelled)

31. (currently amended) A method as in claim ~~30~~ 21 wherein the water soluble compound, when in the aqueous solution, is in the form of molecules having a maximum dimension less than one micron.

32. (cancelled)

33. (original) A method as in claim 21 wherein the inorganic oxide gas barrier layer is an SiOx coating.

34. (original) A method as in claim 21 wherein the inorganic oxide gas barrier layer is applied to the base layer with vapor deposition or sputtering.

35. (original) A method as in claim 21 wherein the base layer is a thermoplastic layer.

36. (original) A method as in claim 21 wherein the base layer is polyethylene terephthalate.

37. (cancelled)

38. (cancelled)

39. (currently amended) A method of packaging a beverage comprising:

providing a container comprising a polymeric multilayer rigid container body and an inorganic oxide gas barrier layer on an exterior surface of the container body, the inorganic oxide barrier layer having pinholes;

applying to the inorganic oxide gas barrier layer ~~a top coat~~ an aqueous solution comprising water and a water soluble compound capable of reducing the permeability of the container to gas or vapor;

evaporating the water, so as to form a top coat on the inorganic oxide barrier layer at least partially disposed in the pinholes and comprising the water soluble compound; and

depositing a beverage in the container.

40. (original) A method as in claim 39 wherein the beverage is a carbonated beverage.